



Town Council Meeting Minutes



Monday, January 14, 2013, at 6:00 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Mahon called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Present at the meeting were Chairman Mahon, Vice Chair Rothhaus, Councilor Koenig, Councilor Boyd, Councilor Flood, Councilor Harrington, Town Manager Eileen Cabanel and Finance Director Paul Micali. Councilor Dwyer was excused from the meeting.

Chairman Mahon made the following announcements: Deadline to file petitioned warrant articles is Tuesday February 12th. Upcoming meeting schedule; Thursday January 17, 2013 at 6:00 pm Budget meeting, Monday January 21, 2013 at 6:00 pm Budget meeting and Thursday January 24, 2013 at 7:00 pm Regular Council meeting.

The Town Council held a public meeting to review the 2013/14 budget, to include the following departments:

- **Welfare:** Pat Murphy advised the Council that there is a 6.27% decrease in the Welfare proposed budget. Welfare is a mandated assistance. She stated that based on the last two years of decreased expenditures she is optimistic that trend will continue. Town Manager Eileen Cabanel asked for clarification on how Mrs. Murphy determines which service to fund. Mrs. Murphy outlined the criteria she uses to determine which service best meets the needs of the residents of Merrimack. Vice Chair Rothhaus asked if Mrs. Murphy's position receives benefits. She stated that her position does not receive benefits. Vice Chair Rothhaus asked Finance Director Paul Micali how the new National Healthcare act would impact the position. Paul Micali advised the Council that he has asked the Town's Legal Counsel to provide a legal opinion on the matter. He advised the Council that they are currently reviewing all part time positions. Councilor Boyd questioned line item for travel and meetings. Councilor Boyd questioned line item 8399 Lamprey Area Health Center.
- **Library:** Library Board of Trustees Chair Susan Gustafson and Library Director Yvette Couser presented the Library's proposed budget. Yvette Couser advised the Council that the Town Manager requested a cut of \$50,000 and the proposed budget was actually cut by \$51,000. She explained that the reduction was realized by the salary difference of the previous and new library director, reducing a custodian position from full time to part time and the elimination of a library aide position. Yvette Couser informed the Council that the Library budget is under one million dollars, the lowest since 1977. She informed the Council that the Library will be implementing new software programs that will bring added services to their patrons such as e-books, downloadable music and e-readers. She read the Library's new mission statement. Yvette Couser advised the Council that the Library continues to hold strategic planning meetings to address the future needs of the community. Chairman Mahon asked for the dates of the meetings. Susan Gustafson outlined the meeting schedule of February 7th, March 7th and April 4th all at 7:00 pm in the Klumpp Room at the Library.

Councilor Boyd asked stated that he is very excited about the anticipated changes as Yvette Couser outlined. He questioned the increase to line item 8353. Yvette Couser explained that it is Merrimack's portion of GMILCS (online circulation). Susan Gustafson stated that the Trustees are entertaining the idea of adding alternates to their board. She stated that if the Council were to give any kind of cost of living adjustment to the Town's full time non-union employees, the Library Board of Trustees would very much be interested in providing something like that to the full time employees at the Library. Chairman Mahon feels the mission statement is too narrow. He suggested adding language that speaks to the Library being a learning resource for the community. Councilor Harrington suggested describing the Library as a community resource providing life long learning opportunities.

- **Town Clerk/Tax Collector:** Town Clerk/Tax Collector Diane Trippett explained that

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approximately 80% of her budget is personnel and benefits. She advised the Council that this budget does include a slight increase to the hours of a part time position. She explained that the Department needs more help. Councilor Boyd asked if it is her intention to fill the Deputy's position. Diane Trippett indicated that it is her intention to fill the position. Councilor Boyd questioned the possibility of an online kiosk to do automated payments. Diane Trippett stated that there is still ongoing issue of customer convenience charge that has been resolved with the credit card companies. Vice Chair Rothhaus would like to know what other communities do. Councilor Koenig questioned the increase to line item 8352. Diane Trippett advised the Council that nothing has changed relative to the legislative change allowing registration of vehicles at dealerships. She was told that it would not be implemented for at least another year.

- **Community Development:** Community Development Director Tim Thompson advised the Council that the proposed budget is a 14% decrease. He outlined the primary changes being the elimination of the Office Manager position from full time to a part time secretary. He stated that the budget is level funded with the exception of a slight increase to line item 8388 Economic Development for an Economic Development website. Councilor Boyd asked Tim Thompson to provide clarification on the benefits that he believes the NRPC provides. Tim Thompson stated that from his perspective the biggest benefit is the transportation component (the metropolitan planning organization) and the iTRaC program. He stated that the NRPC has been very helpful to the Town Center Committee. Tim Thompson stressed that the NRPC provides services that without he would need to spend money on consultants to provide. Tim Thompson stated that the dues paid to the NRPC are a worthwhile investment. Councilor Harrington asked for clarification on how the amount of dues is determined. Tim Roache from the NRPC explained that dues are calculated based on population and the equalized assessed valuation.

- **Parks and Recreation:** Parks and Recreation Director Sherry Kalish explained the biggest changes in her proposed budget. She advised the Council that the budget reduced by \$23,000 with the reductions to the part time employees, reducing the number of hours the life guards would be on duty, the shifting of half of the life guard and half the Water Front Director's salary to the Day Camp budget and the elimination of one swim lesson. Sherry Kalish advised the Council that she has updated the Parks and Recreation Department guide. She spoke about a possible revenue source for consideration. Sherry advised the Council that the annual Easter Egg Hunt is an event that is very well attended and not all participants are Merrimack residents. Councilor Flood questioned the water testing conducted by Parks and Recreation. Mrs. Kalish stated that she tests Naticook Lake swim areas once a week. Councilor Flood questioned the distribution of \$35,000 for the 4th of July. Chairman Mahon estimated \$12,000 to \$13,000 for fireworks with the remaining for the parade and other expenses. Sherry Kalish suggested a parade more like the holiday parade, which is very low cost and is less of a production. Chairman Mahon stated that a small parade will not generate the foot traffic needed for the 4th of July midway. Councilor Flood would like money to be added to the budget to heat the function hall at Wasserman Park.

- **Summer Day Camp:** Parks and Recreation Director Sherry Kalish explained that the budget is reduced based on anticipated lower enrollment. Councilor Koenig stressed that this budget is totally offset by expected revenues. He stated that the only downside to reducing this budget would be if there is a greater than expected enrollment. Paul Micali stated that the difference would have to be found in other savings.

ADJOURN

MOTION was made by Councilor Boyd and seconded by Councilor Harrington to adjourn the meeting.

MOTION CARRIES 6-0-0

Submitted by Tracy Doherty